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A Fight at All Levels

Two groups in the vital area of housing heard good news last week in Atlanta, but members immediately got off their laurels to continue their work.

The mayor's Housing Resources Committee was told that Mayor Ivan Allen Jr.'s five-year goal of 16,800 units of low-cost housing surely would be met.

More than 3,000 have been completed, another 6,000 are under construction, and more than 7,000 are in the planning process.

All wasn't optimism, however. "We're deluding ourselves," said attorney Archer D. Smith III, "if we take these figures and quit working. . . . We've got to be realistic and get behind the package zoning plan." The committee voted unanimously to seek again such a plan, which would zone for low-cost housing simultaneously throughout all sections of the city. Such an approach has been studied by the City Planning department since last August.

The Citizens Advisory Committee for Ur-

ban Renewal, meantime, was hearing that for the first time in urban renewal history here housing construction exceeded the demolition rate.

Lest this set off jubilation all over the place, Atlanta Housing Authority official Howard Openshaw had a somber message, part of which was as follows:

"In our affluent society, it is unthinkable that millions of Americans remain ill-housed; that affluent whites continue to flee to the suburbs, leaving our urban core to the poor and blacks; that spreading slums and blight are leading us not to decay but destruction, while in many cities, officials remain insensitive to the plight of the people."

Starkly put, yes, but a summing of a national concern. It is well that Atlanta sees the problem and is fighting it through committee, agency, and individual leadership. This is one of America's most important battles, and it must be engaged at all levels of government.